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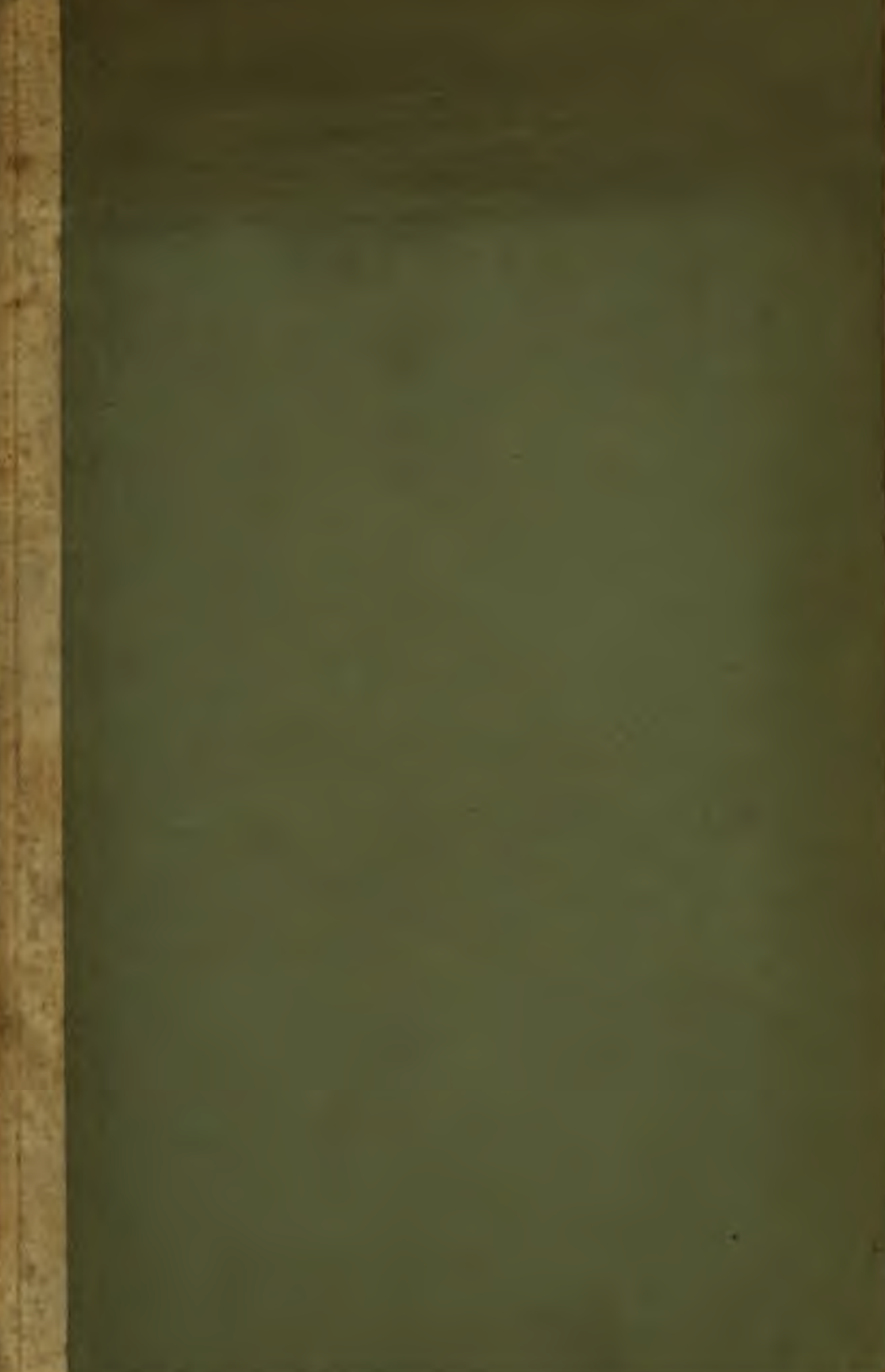
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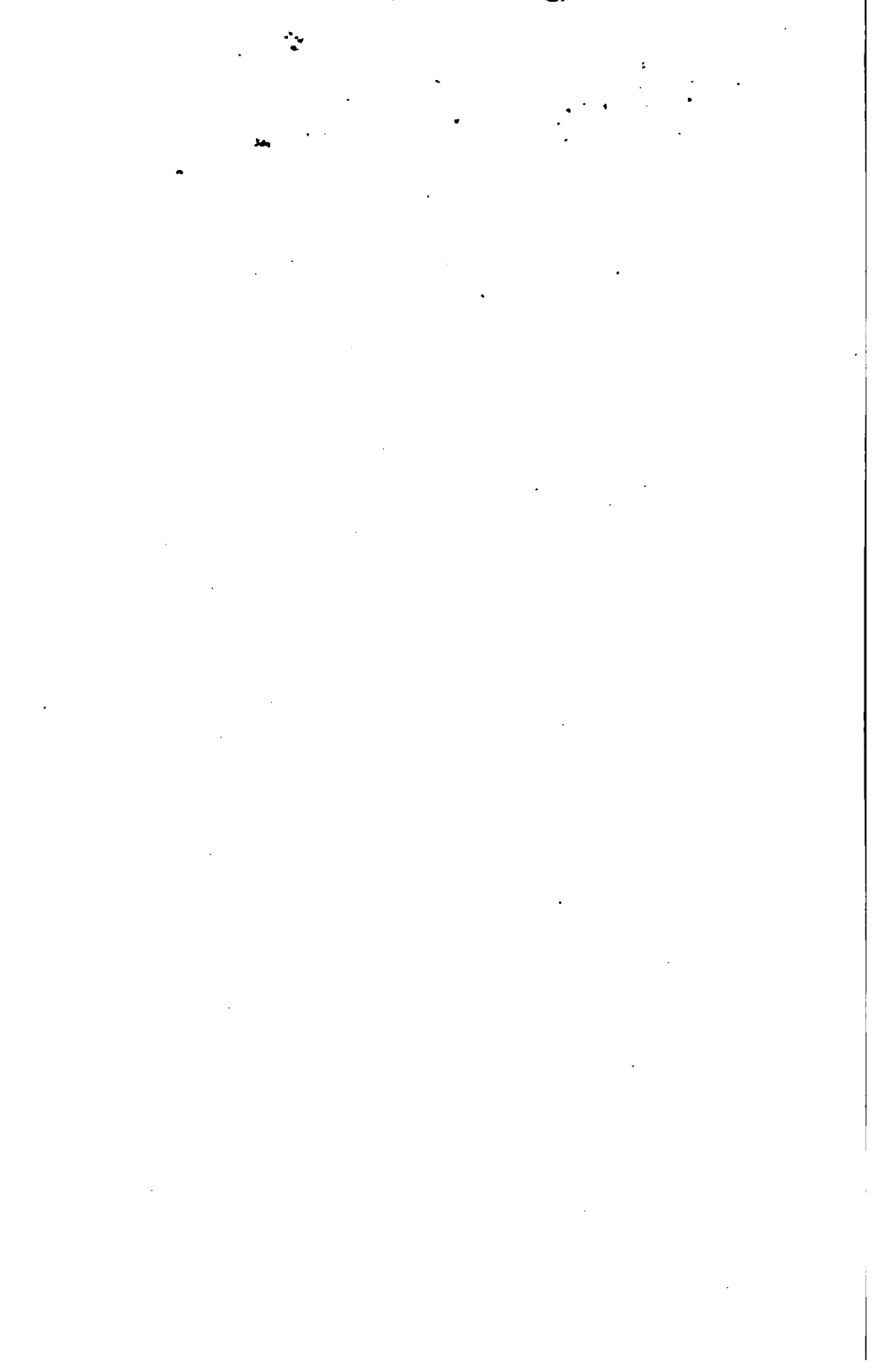
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PHILOSOPHY AND FAITH:

A PLEA FOR AGNOSTIC BELIEF.

BY

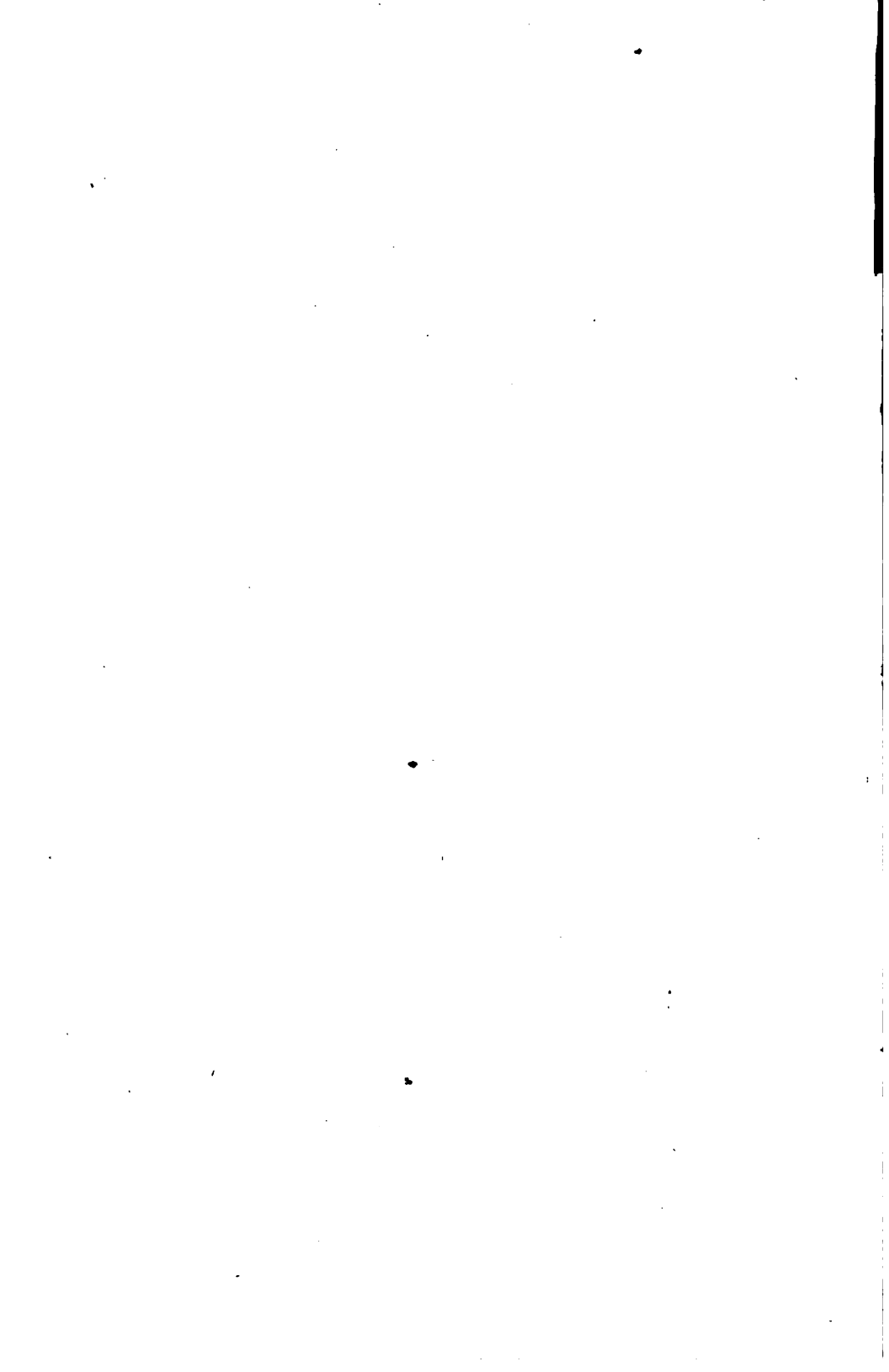
JAMES M. HODGSON, D.Sc., B.D., M.A.

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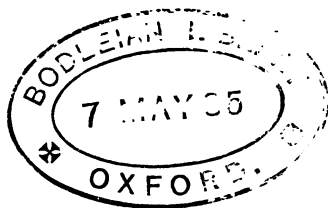
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PHILOSOPHY AND FAITH.

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THE relation of Philosophy to Faith is a subject upon which the widest diversity of opinion has existed and still exists. In illustration of this it will be sufficient to compare the views of Professor Huxley and Sir Wm. Hamilton on the question. Professor Huxley asserts that "a belief is void of justification unless its subject-matter lies within the boundaries of possible knowledge, and unless its evidence satisfies the conditions which experience imposes as the guarantee of credibility."¹ The famous dictum of Sir Wm. Hamilton is that "the capacity of Thought is not to be constituted into the measure of Existence, nor the domain of our Knowledge recognised as necessarily co-extensive with the horizon of our Faith."²

No doubt, to some extent, the controversies which have been waged in reference to the nature and limits of human knowledge have been little more than a vain logomachy which might have been avoided by clearer and more precise definitions of the terms employed ; but beneath all mere verbal questions there are essential differences of opinion which appear to be hopelessly irreconcilable.

It is obvious, indeed, that "it really matters very little in what sense terms are used, so long as the same meaning is rigidly attached to them."³

The schools of Philosophy represented by Hume and Hamilton are, however, sufficiently distinct and separate from each other to warrant the assumption that a con-

¹ "Hume," p. 48.

² "Discussions on Philosophy," p. 15.

³ Huxley's "Hume," p. 72.

ception of knowledge common to the two must command pretty general acceptance. According to Hume, "All knowledge of reality is limited to the world of phenomena revealed to us by experience."⁴ According to Hamilton, "All human knowledge is only of the relative or phenomenal."⁵

Now that modern way of thinking which has been called "Agnosticism, professes itself unable to discover," as Prof. Huxley reminds us, "the indispensable conditions of either positive or negative knowledge in many propositions respecting which not only the vulgar, but philosophers of the more sanguine sort, revel in the luxury of unqualified assurance."⁶ And the aim of the present paper is, *first*, to enquire to what extent the contents and objects of Religious Faith do or do not lie within the boundaries of possible Knowledge, and do or do not present the indispensable conditions of Knowledge; and, *second*, to indicate the impossibility of surrendering that 'unqualified assurance' in which we revel respecting them, in spite of its condemnation by Scientists and Rational Philosophers as 'a belief void of justification.'

Science, as a special form of Knowledge, involves the activity of the intellectual and rational faculties as well as those of Sensuous Cognition. The Empirical Knowledge of individuals is simply the raw material out of which Science is elaborated. The arrangement, classification, and explanation of the manifold individual phenomena of experience and history constitutes Philosophy, and the aggregate of those conditions, laws, or faculties of Human Nature, by which or in accordance with which the elements of Sensuous experience are converted into Philosophical Knowledge may conveniently be designated by the comprehensive terms

⁴ Cf. Huxley's "Hume," p. 60.

⁵ "Metaphysics" I., p. 136.

⁶ "Hume," p. 60.

Intelligence or Reason. "The word Reason corresponds, more nearly than any other familiar appellative that could be used, to Philosophy."⁷ The word has, of course, often been used both with a wider and a narrower application; Kant, Hegel, and Coleridge, for instance, limiting it to the 'faculty conversant with the problem of Transcendental Metaphysics'; whilst Locke and others identify it with the Logical or Discursive Faculty. Jouffroy defines Reason as the Faculty of Understanding; Fraser prefers to regard the term as inclusive of the Faculties of Understanding and Belief. In harmony with the conception of Knowledge already adopted, it will for the present purpose be most convenient to regard Reason as solely a faculty of Knowledge, and so to restrict its operations to the sphere of the Phenomenal.

Whether that element or characteristic of Human Nature (which Reid and Stewart described as Common Sense) to which we owe our Intuitions, our instinctive convictions as to Real Existence, shall be denominated the Faculty of Faith, or (with Hamilton) the Regulative Faculty, or not a faculty at all, is a point of no great significance. At any rate, the term 'faculty' can only be applied to it, as Hamilton says, in a very different sense from that in which it is usually employed, and yet, as he adds, "it is not easy to see by what other word it can be denoted."⁸

Philosophy, then, being defined as the systematic application of Human Reason to the arrangement and explanation of the various elements of experience and history, may be conceived to stand in one or other of *four* relations to the propositions which embody the fundamental and essential objects of 'the unqualified assurance' of Religious Faith.

I. It may be maintained that Reason is absolutely

⁷ Fraser's "Rational Philosophy," p. 131.

⁸ "Metaphysics," II. p. 16.

incompetent to examine or criticize, still more to sit in judgment upon the religious ideas and convictions which have been received by men through Divine Revelation or through some similarly authoritative process.

II. Philosophy may be conceived to be *the instrument* by which alone we can attain to the apprehension, interpretation and certainty of these Divine and spiritual things.

III. It may be supposed that the sole function of Philosophy in relation to our religious convictions is to expose their entire worthlessness and unreality as mere psychological illusions.

IV. It may be that, accepting the essential convictions of Religion as coming to us from some other source and through some other medium, the business of Philosophy is simply, reverently to attempt to set forth the relations of the elements of our Religious Faith to the conceptions and inferences with which Reason and experience themselves have furnished us, and to trace as far as possible the harmony and compatibility of the contents of our Faith with those of our Philosophy.

I. The first of these positions was the doctrine of the Middle Ages, especially prior to the teaching of Anselm, a blind, unintelligent acceptance of an authoritative Creed. Accepting this position, Theological teachers have separated the spheres of Faith and Philosophy as by a great gulf precluding commerce or communion of any kind; and have repudiated any conception of Reason as other than utterly incompetent to act the part of critic in any form or measure of the contents of Religious Faith.

Among Philosophers also, even Leibnitz, clear and independent as a thinker as he was, distinctly and "decidedly condemned all attempts to render the mysteries of Religion comprehensible by demonstration" of the Reason.

Lord Bacon, too, affirms that "if we proceed to treat of [Sacred Theology] we must leave the bark of human Reason and pass into the ship of the Church."⁹

Whilst by Theologians, Protestant as well as Romanist, the functions of Reason in relation, for instance, to Revelation have often been confined to that of passively accepting and faithfully transmitting the ideas and truths of Religious Faith. Dr. Chalmers, for example, says, "We hold by the total insufficiency of Natural Religion to pronounce upon the intrinsic merits of any Revelation. The authority of every Revelation rests exclusively upon its external evidences."¹⁰ He contends that any attempt to show the reasonableness of Christian Doctrine, or its consistency with the conceptions derived from the light of Nature is entirely superfluous and impertinent.

There are few, however, in the present day, outside of the Church of Rome, who sympathize with positions such as these. As Dr. John Young has said, "All who are capable of any mental effort, are conscious of a profound desire to discover a consistency between the dictates of their Intelligence, and the articles of their Creed."¹¹ No doubt there are "many things which they are unable perfectly to harmonize, and are satisfied to leave unsolved; but the desire is irrepressible." "Divine Revelation and right Reason being from one source, it is," he adds, "a sacred thing to strive to see that they utter one voice."¹² "Surely," exclaimed Thomas Erskine, "in any system which purports to be a Revelation from Heaven, we may expect to find an evidence of its truth which shall be independent of all external testimony!"¹³

⁹ "Advancement of Learning," Book IX.

¹⁰ "Evidences and Authority of the Christian Revelation," p. 243.

¹¹ "Province of Reason," p. 21.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 26.

¹³ "Internal Evidence of Christianity."

The assumption which underlies both the II. and III. views as to the relation of Philosophy to Faith is that of Rationalism or Gnosticism. They assume that the supreme and final test of truth and reality is to be found in the Understanding and Reason. If the propositions of Theology are found able to justify themselves to Reason, they are accepted, according to the II. view, as being virtually a department or a product of Philosophy. If they cannot be thus brought within the boundaries of possible rational knowledge, then according to the III. theory, Philosophy is bound to reject and ignore them. "How *can* a man be born when he is old?" it asks; and if Theology can offer no explanation of the 'how' which will satisfy the Reason, the doctrine must be spurned as spurious and unmeaning. The former is the position of Theological Rationalism; the latter is the contention of Secularism and Positivism.

II. In illustration of the opinions of those who affirm the competency of Philosophy to elaborate and sanction a system of Religious and Theological Science, reference may be made to the teaching of Professor Newman, who maintains that "the human mind is competent to sit in moral and spiritual judgment on a professed Revelation; and to decide, if the case seem to require it," that such and such doctrines are intrinsically inadmissible.¹⁴

The doctrine of Wolf which under the title of Illuminism, held the chief place in German philosophical speculation, before the time of Kant, was to the effect that truth was a matter solely of Logic, and that every realm of Existence as well as of Thought might be explored to the utmost by the help of the Syllogism; hence, that the test of Divine Revelation was the possibility of demonstrating its doctrines by Reason. Schleiermacher, again, whose teaching is, in most respects incomparably superior and more spiritual than that of Illuminism, and,

¹⁴ "The Soul," p. 58.

indeed than that of any of the leading German thinkers, felt himself at liberty to frame a sort of Ecclectic Christianity by selecting, according to his own Reason and Judgment, the essential from the superfluous elements in Revelation. He held, accordingly, that the doctrines of the Trinity, the Supernatural Conception, and the Ascension of Jesus Christ, many of His miracles, and other truths and facts of the same class, were purely indifferent; and if human Reason failed to understand and to verify them to its own satisfaction they must be abandoned as merely allegorical or legendary.

But Schleiermacher's claims on behalf of Reason are far outdone by those put forward by Hegel, the great Master of Trancendental Rationalism. The essence of Philosophy consists, he maintains, in knowing God as He is; its great business is the explication of the distinctions which belong to the nature of Thought, which is, he says, the same thing as the explication of God. The Real and the Rational are identical; hence Reality lies wholly within the province of Philosophy; there is nothing to which philosophical investigation does not, or may not, extend. In the words of Dr. Caird, "All human knowledge rests on, or involves, the presupposition of the unity of Knowing and Being." "The Absolute, the Divine, is simply, a perpetual process of endless thinking."¹⁵ Rational Thought is the Real Existence, and nothing truly exists except Thought.

Now, wherever this Hegelian Philosophy fully exerts its influence and absolutely wields the sceptre, every doctrine of Revelation and every element of Religion must, of course, be reduced within the limits of Rational knowledge. But the influence of the system is widely and insidiously powerful for evil in quarters where its extremities would be recoiled from with unfeigned horror. It is to be traced in the growing tendency to minimize Theology, and (in the words of Dr. Wace)

¹⁵ "Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion," p. 129.

"more and more to throw into the background everything which is mysterious and perplexing in our Faith, and to insist solely on that moral part of it which commends itself to the enlightened conscience of an educated Society, trained and stimulated by eighteen centuries of Christian teaching and example. There is a disposition to reduce within the smallest possible limits that which is said to be *essential* in Christianity, so as to diminish as much as may be the appearance of its requiring our assent to truths beyond the range of our natural faculties." ¹⁶

But surely if a supernatural Revelation be recognized at all that recognition must carry with it the admission that there may be, and probably are, among its contents, truths and facts upon which mere human Reason is utterly incompetent to pronounce a decisive opinion, or of them to form an adequate estimate. Is it not, in fact, mere childish arrogance for Reason to assume to be the criterion and judge of all truth and all reality?

III. The third view of the relation which Philosophy sustains to Faith is substantially that of the Sceptic and the Positivist. Not content with asserting the sovereignty of Reason over the doctrines of Revealed Theology, Philosophical Rationalism takes a wider sweep, and subjects to its criticism the Ethical and Theistic foundations of all Theology and all Religion; and beneath its blast the entire system of Metaphysical Religion dissolves and disappears 'like the baseless fabric of a vision and leaves not a rack behind.'

Positivism affirms that all knowledge is of phenomena; that there is no such thing as efficient or final cause, origin or purpose discoverable by us; that the only things known are sensations and their mutual relations of sequence or co-existence, of similarity or dissimilarity. According to John Stuart Mill's Idealistic version of the doctrine the entire Universe of existence is regarded

¹⁶ Bampton Lectures (1879) "Foundations of Faith," p. 14.

as consisting solely of states of consciousness ; there is and can be no knowledge of any external world. In fact, this is the only consistent form of Positivism which recognizes simply states of consciousness having neither object nor subject.

Comte's attitude towards Religion was, accordingly, perfectly consistent, when, in the earlier part of his career, he described religiosity as a childish delusion, the offspring solely of human weakness.

If human knowledge embraces phenomena merely ; and if every 'belief is void of justification' whose 'subject-matter does not lie within the boundaries of possible knowledge' ; it follows that the reputed foundations of Religion, both Ethical and Theistic, which certainly do not fall within the sphere of the phenomenal, must be surrendered as hopelessly indefensible. Human knowledge being, it is urged, necessarily relative, of things, that is, as they appear to us, we can never know what underlies the phenomena observed, nor, indeed, whether anything at all underlies them ; "for aught we can tell the whole world and all that exists or happens in it may be nothing but a system of appearances with no substance whatever." ¹⁷

The first of the theories to which I have referred asserts the *total incompetency* of Reason to intermeddle in matters of Religious Faith ; the second and third agree in affirming the *absolute sufficiency* of Reason to investigate and to dominate the entire Universe of Being as well as of Knowing. The second and third differ in that the former finds a place in its Philosophy for a Religion which it endorses as natural and rational ; whilst the latter with greater consistency and thoroughness contemptuously expels Religion along with Metaphysics as being merely the superstitious bogies of intellectual infancy.

IV. The fourth position is that of those who believe

¹⁷ Temple's Bampton Lectures, 1884, "Science and Religion," p. 38.

that they are able to steer a middle course and so avoid the Scylla of Rationalism and the Charybdis of authoritative Dogmatism ; who frankly recognize the truth that "the world by wisdom knew not God," and yet rejoice in being addressed as wise men capable in some measure of judging that which is said, of estimating the truths and facts revealed, and of being 'ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in them.'

The doctrine of those who have been called Christian Agnostics, of those, that is to say, who are at the same time Christian believers and Philosophical Agnostics, accepts the fundamental facts and propositions of Theism, Ethics, and Revealed Religion without the evidence of Reason, prior to and independent of its exercise, and yet as being sanctioned by, at least, as valid and indisputable a guarantee as that by which Reason itself can sustain and enforce its own axioms or inferences. In fact, we do not hesitate to affirm that the root of Faith penetrates far more deeply into the ground of things than the roots of Reason can possibly claim to do.

Take first, the fundamental problems of Ethics ; whence comes the feeling and the idea of obligation ? and By what criteria or standard shall we discriminate between the several particulars of action and of conduct which moral obligation constrains us to pursue or to avoid ? Is it possible to appeal to Reason to guide or help us in the attempt to solve these problems ? Can Reason explain the origin of the sense of obligation ? If the sense of moral obligation could be resolved into another mode merely of representing or expressing the *expediency* of acting upon a certain fundamental maxim ; Reason might, then, be recognized as having a voice in the matter. But it is surely a miserably inadequate conception of the grounds of moral obligation which permits the attempt to interpret them as simply the generalized consciousness of the claims or attractions of that which

is desirable or prudent. The Categorical Imperative of the Moral Sense cannot be conceived to rest upon any foundation supplied by the logical Reason. No arguments can be urged, no evidence can be adduced, to justify its claims to authority. Our obedience to its behests springs from a Faith which does not even pretend to "satisfy the conditions which experience imposes as the guarantee of credibility."

So again, in regard to the determination of Moral Distinctions, by what appeal to Reason can it be decided whether we shall take as our guide the Principle of Utility, personal or social, the generalizations of Historical Evolution, the sentimentalities of Altruism, the conventionalities of Society, the precepts of positive Authority, or the *a priori* conceptions we may cherish as to the Constitution and ideal of Human Nature?

Personally we may be absolutely satisfied; we may possess 'an unqualified assurance' of the validity of the last-mentioned criterion and of the utter worthlessness of all the rest; but by what *arguments* can we pretend to justify our conviction?

De principiis (as well as *de gustibus*) *non disputandum est*. We *believe* that the only true touchstone for the discrimination between right and wrong, between virtue and vice, is to be found in the conception of τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν, the ἔργον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, the typical idea of Human Nature; but our Faith is a conviction void of rational justification.

Then, secondly, we have the great question of Revealed Religion;—how shall we be certain that that which claims to be authoritative and Divine is really so? What are the Notes of a true Religious Revelation? Can *Reason* furnish a satisfactory and sufficient guarantee of its credibility?

If immediate revelation from God be still a possibility, or if it has at any era in the history of the world, been actually given to men, by what criteria or evidences

could those to whom it came unmistakably recognize it as authentic and Divinely authoritative? Could the light of Reason decide the question for them?

Kant and Fichte, who both admitted the possibility of a Supernatural Revelation, denied that any one could determine with certainty whether that which seemed to him to be such was really Divine.

Without, however, accepting a position like that, and whilst, indeed, emphatically repudiating it, we cannot but acknowledge that unless we have an exact knowledge of the nature of God, we cannot tell for what purposes God might think fit to give a Revelation, nor by what medium and method He might see it to be best to impart it to us, and still less what the character and contents of that Revelation might be. All that Reason can do in estimating the character of the contents of such a Revelation is to furnish a presumption more or less strong and clear that they are credible and genuine.¹⁸ The utmost that it can pretend to say in regard to the Divine origin of a Revelation of Religion is of a negative character; in no case can it be sufficient to *prove* that it has come from God. It may be that we are bound, as Mansel has said, "to believe that a Revelation given by God can never contain anything that is *really* unwise or unrighteous; but it is well that we should remember that we are not always capable of estimating exactly the wisdom or righteousness of particular doctrines or precepts."¹⁹

Of course it is one thing to insist upon testing a professedly Divine Revelation by means of our rational powers in order to an absolute decision as to its truth and Divine origin; and quite a different thing to examine the contents of such a Revelation for the purpose of ascertaining how far we can discover in it characteristics which commend themselves to us, in order that

¹⁸ Cf. Mansel's Bampton Lectures, p. 152.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 155.

our Faith in its genuineness may thereby be confirmed.

Within its own province, rightly and reverently used, the light of Reason is neither delusive nor worthless. But it cannot undertake the sponsorship for our Faith in the Divinity of a professed Revelation.

We accept the Revelation given to the world through Christ and recorded in the Christian Scriptures mainly on the ground that, as Coleridge expresses it, it *finds* us; because it commends itself to the intuitive, instinctive, spiritual faculties of the human soul.

We do not believe in its Divine origin and authority because we can *prove* its truth, nor because it satisfies our Intelligence and Reason; but *without a Reason* we accept and believe it, because in itself it is such as to *compel* our reverent homage by an irresistible conviction of its truth and worth. As of old, the very gait of the goddess disclosed her divinity; so in the case of Christian Truth, and of Christ Himself, the Divine Glory cannot be hid. Our Faith, however, is a belief which according to Professor Huxley is "void of rational justification."

Then, in the *third* place, and more particularly, the investigation of the Bases of Theism involves the right adjustment of the relations of Philosophy and Faith.

The two great problems of Theism are:—Why do we believe that God is? and Can we know what God is?

The familiar forms of the argument for the Being of a God; the Ontological, the Cosmological, the Teleological, and the Deontological Arguments; constitute the answer which Reason has tried to give to the enquiry, 'Why do we believe that there is a God?' The first of these has never been regarded as of much cogency or real value; the Cosmological argument involves the principle of Causality, for which Philosophy can find no evidence, no rational explanation of our belief in it; the Teleological involves the doctrine of Final Causes which

Philosophical Science can never prove to be anything more than a Psychological illusion; and the Deontological Argument proceeds upon the assumption of the reality of moral obligation, which, as we have seen, rests not upon any foundation of Reason, but upon a purely irrational and instinctive Faith, whilst the further assumption that a law of Duty implies as its source the existence of a personal Lawgiver is also "a belief void of justification," inasmuch as it offers and can offer no evidence capable of satisfying "the conditions which experience imposes as the guarantee of credibility." The line of Reason, to borrow Hume's illustration, is too short to fathom such immense abysses as those from which spring up our conviction of the existence of God as the Maker and Ruler of all things and all creatures.

The ideas, feelings, and convictions, which constitute the foundation of Religion are a product evolved in the experience of human beings,—beings whose nature, attributes and faculties are what men's are, and who are surrounded by an environment of the character of that in which men find themselves. They are the outcome of the interplay of Self and Not-Self in the manifold mutual relations which subsist between the two. The entire objective element of experience is to us what it is because the interpretative faculty of Human Intelligence apprehends it in accordance with the forms, modes, and laws of its own activity. As Edward Miall has said, "Every class of ideas emanating from the mind of man require in order to their birth an impregnation of the innate aptitudes and spontaneous tendencies of our nature by the suggestive activity of external existences."²⁰ Or, in the words of the Bampton Lecturer for 1884 "Just such an instrument [as the Kaleidoscope] is the human mind. Its faculties and forms arrange all things according to a pattern of their own. This pattern is, as

²⁰ "Bases of Belief," p. 96.

it were, superadded to the manifestations that come from the things themselves."²¹ All phenomena proceed from a dual parentage; they are what they are, not only because the objective noumena are what they are, but also because the subjective entity is what it is; if either were different, the resulting product would be different.

Now, in seeking for the bases of our belief that God exists, we find that several psychological faculties, or processes, or conditions are closely concerned in the development of our conviction of the reality of His existence.

There is, first, the Intuition of Power. The perception of phenomena of any kind irresistibly suggests to human beings the idea of, and the belief in the existence of some Power which sustains to the phenomena observed the relation of cause. What Mr. Spencer calls 'the momentum of Thought' leads us from the changes which appear to the Powers by which they are effected. But this idea of Power is a postulate intuitively applied to phenomena, and not an observed function found in them.

Then we have, second, the Intuition of Constancy in Nature. What is the ground of the assumption upon which all Induction is founded, that the course of Nature is uniform? It cannot have been obtained from Reason, since to establish it we should require substantially a universal experience.

Mr. Bain rightly attributes it to 'the primary credulity of the mind.' It is, in fact, an *a priori* Faith which is, as Bishop Temple puts it, "the supreme *Postulate* without which Scientific Knowledge would be impossible."²² Thirdly, there is what has been called the Intuition of Intelligence, the impulse by which we are compelled to formulate and accept as true, such axioms as that 'Design implies a designer,' and that 'Harmony, method,

²¹ "Temple's "Science and Religion," p. 13.

²² Bampton Lectures (1884), p. 6.

and plan betoken the presence of intelligent purpose.' We instinctively recognize Intelligence in the Universe as involved in the relations subsisting between its several parts both contemporary and successive. "Our minds are so constituted, says Dr. Winchell, "that we are necessarily impelled to attribute a useful collocation of parts to intelligent purpose."²³

Then as a fourth Intuition may be mentioned that of Real Existence or Substance, which leads to the affirmation of such axiomatic judgments as that 'Every quality implies a substance,' and that 'Every attribute implies real being.' According to Berkeley, the *esse* of all things consisted simply in their *percipi*; and according to J. S. Mill, the term Substance is an unmeaning one. But is it not the universal testimony of mankind that we have convictions, which we cannot but regard as valid, that beneath our changing states of consciousness there exists a permanent entity, a Self; that our fellow-men exist not merely as groups of our own sensations, but that in them, and constituting them, there is, as in ourselves, an unknown spiritual reality; and that behind those permanent clusters of sensations to which we give the name of the material Universe there exists a substantial though utterly unknown entity which stands to those sensations in the relation of cause to effect? These convictions cannot have been arrived at by any process of logical inference; they are simply an instinctive demand for a basis, a substance in which the Power to which we are obliged to ascribe the sensations we experience may be regarded as residing; and also a permanent basis for Intelligence itself. We are so constituted that we cannot help the conviction, but we can assign no *reason* for the Faith we cherish.

In the fifth place, there is the Intuition of Personality as the Unity in which we find the alliance of Power and Intelligence. We intuitively believe in

²³ "Science and Religion," p. 306.

Personality as the noumenon which constitutes the foundation of the phenomena of consciousness and volition. It is what Kant called 'the Synthetic Unity of Apperception,' the instinctive conviction of the inseparable Alliance in real being of the Intelligent Principle and the Volitional Energy. There is the same intuitive recognition of a Unity of Substance in reference to the Power and Intelligence displayed by other beings; and in Nature, also, our Intuition of Personality unifies the unknown Reality of Force with the equally unknown basis of Intelligence manifested therein.

The sixth in the list of Intuitions involved in the Theistic Faith is that of Dependence; the instinct which prompts men everywhere to pray. There is, as Mansel says, innate in our nature, a conviction "that our life, natural and spiritual, is not in our own power, that there is One above us on whom we are dependent;"²⁴ and this as Dr. Calderwood has said, "is one of the essential elements of the Religious Instinct."²⁵ This sense of Dependence is neither the product of Experience, nor the conclusion of a process of logical inference; it is a primitive, instinctive conviction of our Human Nature.

And then, seventhly, there is the Moral Intuition; the conviction that the Moral Law is the expression of the Will of a Divine Lawgiver. Cardinal Newman says, "this instinct of the mind recognizing an external master in the dictate of Conscience is parallel to that of the infant by which the presence of his mother or his nurse is discerned under the shifting shapes and colours of the visible world."²⁶ "Conscience," says Dr. Flint, "does not rule, nor pretend to rule as an autocratic authority; it unequivocally declares itself a delegated authority."²⁷

²⁴ Bampton Lectures (1858), p. 72.

²⁵ "Moral Philosophy," p. 232.

²⁶ "Grammar of Assent," p. 107.

²⁷ "Theism," p. 210.

These, then, seem to be the main foundations upon which the Faith of Theism rests. That Faith is the spontaneous and inevitable recognition by the instincts of Human Nature of the Divine self-manifestation.

“ As blind nestlings, unafraid,
Stretch up, wide-mouthed, to every shade
By which their downy dream is stirred,
Taking it for the mother-bird ;
So, when God's shadow, which is light,
My wakening *instincts* falls across,—
Silent as sunbeams over moss,—
In my heart's nest half-conscious things
Stir with a helpless sense of wings,
Lift themselves up, and tremble long
With premonitions sweet of song.” 28

By the very make of our being we are compelled to refer every phenomenon to some cause in explanation of its origin ; and to refer the whole of that which is to a great All-powerful First Cause ; since our Faith in the Uniformity and constancy of Nature's Laws carries with it the Faith in the unchanging identity of the Power from whose manifestations those laws are generalized. We are obliged to recognize in the harmony, and intelligible, rational order of the Universe the tokens of the existence and activity of Intelligence ; and, in like manner, we cannot help but assume the existence of some real entity as the basis or seat alike of Power and of Intelligence ; and, further, since the Power is manifestly guided by Intelligence, and the Intelligence revealed in the operations of the Power, we intuitively refer the two attributes to one and the same real being, a Supernatural Person. And, then, the Sense of Dependence and that of Moral Obligation naturally and almost inevitably attach themselves to the Supernatural Person whom we are thus led to recognize as the great First Cause of all things.

We are thus brought into view of the great funda-

mental problem of Theism;—namely, Why should we regard these subjective convictions as objectively valid and veracious? Is it possible to justify ourselves in projecting them, as we do, upon the canvas of objective reality? Can we, in any way, anchor our Psychological Laputa to some *terra firma* of Real Being? In other words, what basis of Certitude can we find in regard to these matters?

According to Fichte, the Ego is certain of nothing except itself. According to Hindu Philosophy, Certitude is a mere dream; the entire phantasmagoria of Consciousness and Thought is 'maya,' or illusion. And yet practically men for the most part live and act as if conscious that they possess this Certainty.

There have been said to be *three* kinds of Certitude: Empirical, Logical, and Intuitional.

The sensations, however, of which alone we are empirically certain pretend to no other reality than a relative reality; a reality in our conscious experience. Logical Certitude, also, is purely formal,—a Certitude which is simply the reflection of certain laws of Thought, entirely subjective and hypothetical, asserting no reality whatever outside of ourselves.

Intuitional Certainty alone affirms the existence of Real Being, objective or subjective. The subject-matter of our intuitive convictions lies far beneath the boundaries of all possible knowledge. Knowledge being wholly and solely of phenomena; of the Ego and of the Non-Ego, underlying the phenomena of conscious experience we know and can know nothing; all we have is the instinctive conviction of their existence.

How, then, can we by Reason or Philosophy justify "the unqualified assurance" in which we revel in relation to them? Are we not compelled with Dr. McCosh frankly to admit that we *cannot* by any arguments reply to the assertions of Pyrrhonic Scepticism? Does not all Philosophy begin with postulates which

Reason can neither provide nor defend ? We can neither prove nor justify them, nor advance any reason for our Faith in them ; they *may be* a purely subjective illusion, but practically they are found to be alike indispensable, serviceable, and sufficient.

"Faith," says Mr. Mackay, "the necessary evidence of the seen as well as the unseen, is the assumed basis of all inferential knowledge, for it is the only assurance we have of the reality of the world in which we move and live. The external something whose existence we presume but cannot prove as the cause of our sensations is as much an object of Faith as the unseen Deity, or the anticipated renewal of our existence. Habitually but unconsciously, we depend on Faith in every perception and every act, in every enquiry after truth, and every expectation of a practical result. Faith, thus essential to material comfort and support, is like the pulses of the heart, involuntary and intuitive."²⁹

"The part played by Reason," says Dr. Wace, "in the marvellous course of human development has indeed been momentous, and has been second only to that of Faith ; but, regarding History as a whole, the part of Reason must be admitted to have been a secondary one."³⁰ The relations between man and man of which the daily course of life and the organization of Society are made up, are founded "upon a general habit of mutual trust and faith." "The essence of the filial relation involves a moral confidence antecedent to experience, and capable, in fact, of sustaining severe apparent contradictions to that experience."³¹

Faith, in fact, is the foundation of Reason and Sense not less than of Intuition ;—not the credence for which a reason can be given, but the blind, inexplicable, mysterious Faith of Instinct.

²⁹ "Progress of the Intellect."

³⁰ Bampton Lectures (1878), p. 9.

³¹ Ibid, p. 246.

'In the last resort,' said Jacobi, 'all knowledge depends upon Faith.' Schelling, also asserts that "Faith is the principle of all demonstration, the unprovable, self-evident ground of all evidence."

Hartman says, "the unconscious clairvoyance of Instinct appears in Consciousness as Presentiment, or Faith."³² The truth, he further says as to "the relation of the Ego to the Absolute, can be attained neither by rational philosophy nor by external Revelation."

Of Sensation and of Intuition alike it holds good, as Dorner points out, that 'Fides præcedit Intellectum.'

All mere "knowledge" says Clement of Alexandria, "is capable of being taught, but the First Cause of the Universe can be apprehended by Faith alone."³³

Anselm's familiar motto was 'Credo, ut intelligam.'

The object of all human knowledge is the world of phenomena; and phenomena are the product of the two co-operating factors, Self and Not-Self, neither of which lies within the boundaries of knowledge. We *believe* in an external world, and we *believe* in a personal entity, though we have no knowledge of either the one or the other. In the same way and with precisely the same justification, or the same lack of justification, we *believe* in the relation of Cause and Effect as binding phenomena together; we *believe* in our own personal Dependence upon an Absolute and Infinite Being, our Maker and Ruler; and we *believe* in the obligation of the Divine Will upon us as a Moral Law. Our only ground or justification, so far as it can be so called, for any of these Beliefs is that so our Nature prompts and impels us.

In the words of Dr. Fraser, of Edinburgh, "Legitimate relief from scepticism is claimed as the result of a surrender to certain transcendent 'tendencies to believe' which are the common consciousness, of mankind." "A Philosophy grounded on Faith was the highest lesson of

³² "Philosophy of the Unconscious," I., p. 363.

³³ "Stromata," II., 4.

Reid and his successors, especially Hamilton, in Scotland ; more covertly of Kant, in Germany, in the moral solution, offered in his *Practical Reason* ; and, in an impressive form, it was the essence of the teaching of Jacobi." "This Philosophy offers *faiths* as the philosophical basis and constitution of all philosophical knowledge." "Those who look at things from this point of view are satisfied that they find what is deepest and truest in their relations to Reality, not in pure Thought, but in the Faith, the irresistible impulse to believe,—from which, when in a normal, healthy state, a human being cannot escape."³⁴

"We are so cut off," says Professor Herbert, "from things-in-themselves that it must be always open to the determined sceptic to question the truth of our most fundamental convictions,"³⁵ such as that memory is veracious, or that the reasoning process is valid. Similarly with our recognition of the constancy of Nature ; of external Force, or Causality ; of a permanent Ego underlying the changing series of our conscious states ; and of other minds like our own,—these things all transcend the sphere of phenomena and of knowledge ; and so according to Professor Huxley are the objects of beliefs which are 'void of justification,' since they fail to "satisfy the conditions which experience imposes as the guarantee of credibility."

Our only warrant, in short, of the Real, and the Absolute is the universal and inevitable INSTINCT OF FAITH.

"We have but Faith ; we cannot know ;
For knowledge is of things we see." ³⁶

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen." Whilst Science and Philosophy can recognize nothing but phenomena ;—

³⁴ Fraser's "*Berkeley*" (Phil. Classics), p. 229, 230, 231.

³⁵ "*Modern Realism*," p. 368.

³⁶ Tennyson's "*In Memoriam*."

"Nothing before, nothing behind ;
 The steps of Faith
 Fall on the seeming void, and find
 The rock beneath." 37

"And there is Truth transcending far
 The way of Scientific Thought,
 Which travels to the faintest star
 And verges on the smallest mote.
 But all beyond it knoweth not ;
 Its ladder based on earth must lean
 Its summit on *the felt and seen* ;
 But still our hearts their rest have sought
 In the dim beyond, where it hath not been." 38

The foregoing examination of the character of the foundations on which our conviction *that there is a God* depends, has placed us in a position to deal more briefly with the further question of Theism ; What can we know of God ?

Theology as the philosophical knowledge of God takes its place on the common level of all human knowledge. It is the rational, systematic exhibition of the phenomenal relations which the Absolute, the Unknown and Unknowable, sustains to finite creatures ; resting, indeed, like all other forms of knowledge upon non-rational Faith in our instinctive Intuitions, and like them possessing a purely relative validity.

Given simply Experience and the strictly Rational Faculties, and we cannot possibly arrive at any other conclusion than Phenomenalism. Metaphysics and Real Being are entirely out of the question on such conditions. And the foundations of Religion being metaphysical are consequently beyond the range of Experience or Philosophy.

Even in the worlds of Sense and Self-consciousness we can only recognize Real Existence by the introduction of a different principle and process from those of

37 Whittier.

38 Olric Grange.

Reason and of Reasoning ;—an Instinctive Faith in the existence of something behind the phenomena of consciousness. And as the basis of the Intuitions upon which Religion primarily rests we have a similar mysterious Faith which recognizes the real existence of the Absolute and Perfect Being upon whom we ourselves and all Nature with us absolutely depend.

Corresponding to the three great classes of philosophical opinion concerning the existence of an external world, we have three schools of Philosophical Theology. Akin to the philosophical doctrine of Absolute Idealism, there is the Transcendental Theology of Hegel and others which virtually regards God as constituted by the notions fabricated by the speculative activity of the Human Intellect. The Natural Realism of Hamilton which is substantially the conception of the world that, apart from enquiry, everybody entertains, corresponds to the Anthropomorphic Theology which regards God as possessing in His own absolute essence precisely and solely the nature and character in which He has been pleased to reveal Himself to men ;—a Theology which, as Mr. Matthew Arnold puts it, describes God as “a magnified and non-natural man.” Finally, the doctrine of Cosmothetic Idealism corresponds to and harmonizes with the doctrine of Relativity in Theology, the doctrine of Pascal, Hamilton, Mansel, and others.

The Cosmothetic Idealist holds that the world perceived and known is the product of the two unknown factors, Self and Not-Self ; and so the Christian Agnostic, accepting by Faith the real existence of the Divine Being, and of finite spirits, though both alike lie beyond the boundaries of possible Knowledge, assigns to Theology as a branch of Science, the task of unfolding and systematizing the manifold phenomenal relations which Human Intelligence is competent to recognize as subsisting between God and men.

“God can be definitely known to us,” contends Prof.

Fraser, "only in the finite and dependent phenomena which form His works and His word. All definite and systematic Theological Knowledge is the fruit of Induction. It can yield only a series of practical solutions of an absolutely insoluble problem. When we try to go beyond the natural and supernatural phenomena which constitute this practical Revelation of God, in order to construct a Science of the transcendent and adorable One, we are punished by the confusion in which the revealed facts themselves become involved." "Revealed Theology,—whether the Revelation be contained in the Evolutions of Nature, or in the words of a Book,—is thus a body of practical knowledge, rather than a Science of Speculative Truths concerning the absolute relations of man to God." "The works and the Word of God are not properly regarded as a scientific extension of our Metaphysical Faith."³⁹

And yet, just as we do not rob the other branches of Science of their meaning and their value when we affirm that no Scientific Student need hope, by the most patient analysis and comparison of the sensations of sight and sound, of taste and touch, to discover the essential nature of Matter, Life, or Spirit; so neither do we diminish the importance and dignity of Theological Science when we insist upon its purely relative and anthropomorphic character.

"The highest principles of thought and action to which we can attain are regulative, not speculative; they do not tell us what things are in themselves, but how we must conduct ourselves in relation to them."⁴⁰ "We may, indeed, believe, and ought to believe that the knowledge which our Creator has permitted us to attain to, whether by Revelation, or by our natural faculties, is not given to us as an instrument of deception. We may believe, and ought to believe that intellectually as well

³⁹ Fraser's "Essays in Philosophy," pp. 250, 253.

⁴⁰ Bampton Lectures (1858), p. 93.

as morally our present life is a state of discipline and preparation for another ; but in thus believing we desert the evidence of Reason and rest on that of Faith ; yet of the principles on which even Reason itself depends, it is obviously impossible to have any other guarantee. But such a Faith however well-founded has itself only a regulative and practical, not a speculative and theoretical application. It bids us rest content within the limits which have been assigned to us ; but it cannot enable us to overleap those bounds, nor exalt to a more absolute character the conclusions obtained by finite thinkers under the conditions of finite Thought."

"We must remain content with the belief that we have *that* knowledge of God which is best adapted to our wants and training. How far that knowledge represents God as He is, we know not, and we have no need to know." ⁴¹

Theologians have, however, in various directions been chargeable with treating Revealed Religion as if that which is relatively true,—true for us, and according to our poor powers of knowing,—were the standard and measure of Absolute Reality ; and with attempting to 'find a Procrustes-bed of Science into which the contents of Religious Faith may be harmoniously fitted.'

It will be sufficient to mention two of the more popular phases of thought which are incompatible with the foregoing views as to the relations of Philosophy and Faith ;—*first*, the doctrine, that the criteria of Moral Distinctions are to be traced back to the Absolute Nature of God ; and, *second*, the doctrine that the idea of the Divine Fatherhood is not to be regarded as true merely within the sphere of Human Knowledge and conditions, but that, in common with other 'finite symbols, and human types and images' under which God is represented to the minds of men, the human

⁴¹ Bampton Lectures (1858), pp. 95, 96.

relationship furnishes us with an absolute conception of the eternal and essential nature of Deity.

"Errors of this kind,—and in the present day," says Mr. Ruskin, "we are in constant and grievous danger of falling into them,—arise from the originally mistaken idea that man 'can by searching find out God, find out the Almighty to perfection.'"

"In order to render communion with Himself possible the Deity has stooped from His throne, and has not only, in the person of the Son, taken upon Him the veil of our human *flesh*, but, in the person of the Father has taken the veil of our human *thoughts*, and permitted us by His own spoken authority to conceive Him simply and clearly as a loving Father and Friend,—a Being to be walked with, and to be reasoned with; to be moved by our entreaties, angered by our rebellion, alienated by our coldness, pleased by our love, and glorified by our labor. This conception of God, which is the child's, is evidently the only one which can be universal, and therefore the only one which *for us* can be true. The moment that in our pride of heart we refuse to accept the condescension of the Almighty, and desire Him, instead of stooping to hold our hands, to rise up before us into His glory;—we, hoping that, by standing on a grain of dust or two of human knowledge higher than our fellows, we may behold the Creator as He rises;—God takes us at our word; He rises into His own invisible and inconceivable majesty; He goes forth upon the ways which are not our ways, and retires into the thoughts which are not our thoughts;—and we are left alone." ⁴² "Knowledge, it shall vanish away; * * * But now abideth Faith." ⁴³

⁴² "Modern Painters," Vol. IV. pp. 86-7.

⁴³ 1 Cor. xiii. 8 and 13.

